

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 0135

FROM QUINLAN MUSCAT

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINS MU UK

SUBJECT: DHOFAR WAR AND BRITISH/OMANI STRATEGY

REF: AMMAN 6784

1. JORDANIAN SOURCE OF REFTEL APPARENTLY HAS LEFT OMAN BEFORE RECENT MAJOR SUCCESS IN DHOFAR; NEW IRANIAN FORCES HAVE NOW CLEARED ROAD THROUGH ESCARPMENT, PERMITTING ROAD CONVOY TRANSPORT FROM MUSCAT TO SALALAH, AND PRESEGING PACIFICATION OF ALL OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN SECTORS. SOURCE ALSO APPARENTLY UNAWARE THAT PROPORTION OF BALUCH IN ARMY HAS BEEN REDUCED AND RECRUITMENT OF OMANI SOLDIERS INTENSIFIED. PROBLEMS ARE SEVERE MANPOWER SHORTAGE DUE TO PAST AND PERHAPS CONTINUING RECRUITMENT OF OMANI'S INTO MUCH BETTER-PAID ABU DHABI FORCES, AND LOW RATE OF REINLISTMENT OF OMANI SOLDIERY.

2. THAT BRISITH ARE INTERESTED IN PROLONGING DHOFAR WAR SEEMS TO BE AN ARTICLE OF FAITH WITH MOST EASTERN ARABS AND CERTAINLY THE SAUDI'S. MOREOVER, CHARGES
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THAT THE WAR HAS NOT BEEN PURSUED AGGRESSIVELY ARE,

IN FACT, DIFFICULT TO REFUTE BECAUSE BRITISH MILITARY LEADERS THEMSELVES CONCEDE THAT THEY WOULD FIGHT WITH A DIFFERENT PACE AND STYLE IF THEY HAD RESERVES OF TROOPS AND EQUIPMENT AND DID NOT NEED TO FEAR PUBLIC REACTION (IN OMAN AS WELL AS UK) TO LARGER NUMBERS OF CASUALTIES. PREVIOUS DEFENCE SECRETARY AND MORE THAN ONE BRITISH OFFICER STILL ON THE SCENE HAVE SAID THAT DHOFAR STRATEGY AND TACTICS ARE BASED IMPLICITLY ON FEAR THAT HEAVY LOSSES OF BRITISH MANPOWER (ESPECIALLY SECONDED OFFICERS) WOULD LEAD TO WITHDRAWAL OF HMG SECONDMENTS. GENERAL CREASEY DENIES THIS EXPLICITLY AND FORCEFULLY, SAYING HIS POLICY IS BASED NOT ONLY ON THE NEED TO HUSBAND OMAN GOVERNMENT RESOURCES, BUT THE CONVICTION THAT STEADY PRESSURE ON ENEMY FORCES AND CONSTRICTION OF ENEMY SUPPLY LINES ARE PROVING SUCCESSFUL. CREASEY ALSO IS AWARE OF PERVASIVE ARAB SUSPICIONS OF BRITISH INTENTIONS IN OMAN AND IS NOW IMPLEMENTING PLAN FOR RAPID OMANIZATION OF ARMED FORCES. CREASEY HAS ADMITTED PRIVATELY THAT CONTRACT OFFICERS HAVE A VESTED INTEREST IN STATUS QUO AND HIS OMANIZATION PLAN CALLS FOR REPLACEMENT OF HEADQUARTERS CONTRACT OFFICERS WITH SECONDED OFFICERS, WHO WILL PRESUMABLY BE MORE EAGER TO TRAIN OMANI REPLACEMENTS. WE HAVE HEARD RUMORS THAT CONTRACT OFFICERS IN THE FIELD MAY ALSO BE REPLACED WITH BRITISH SECONDED OFFICERS.

3. BRITISH IN OMAN ARE MILDLY CRITICAL OF JORDANIAN ARROGANCE TOWARD BACKWARD OMANI'S, BUT ALSO EXPRESS SOLID APPRECIATION OF JORDANIAN TRAINING ROLE IN OMAN AND ESPECIALLY IN JORDANIAN MILITARY SCHOOLS. WE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY INFORMATION EMBASSY AMMAN MAY BE ABLE TO DEVELOP ON ATTITUDES OF OMANI OFFICERS IN JORDAN TOWARD DHOFAR WAR.
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